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MINERALS PROGRAM  
FILE COPY

September 25, 1991

TO: Minerals File

FROM: Holland Shepherd, Senior Reclamation Specialist HWS

RE: Site Visit, MiVida Mine, M/037/028 and Meeting with San Juan County Officials, Energy Fuels and Minerals West, San Juan County, Utah

Date of Inspection: September 25, 1991

Time of Inspection: 10:00 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.

Conditions: Sunny, warm

Participants: LaVern Tate, Corine Roring, Oleen Hatch, and Dwn Boyle San Juan County Historical Commission; Wayne Wright, Energy Fuels; Lowell Braxton, Wayne Hedberg, Fran Craigle, Steel McIntyre, Holland Shepherd and Tony Gallegos, DOGM

Purpose: To evaluate the site's historical values in preparation of the upcoming reclamation

The MiVida mine site, permitted by Minerals West and now being operated by Energy Fuels, is slated for reclamation this fall. This meeting was to establish a plan to preserve some of the historical values at this site, and to incorporate these into the reclamation plan. The Division has contacted members of the San Juan County Historical Society about a month ago in regard to this reclamation. San Juan County officials have recently been informed and are trying to drum up some interest within the county to preserve and possibly fund the preservation of some of the historical values of the MiVida mine site.

Members of the San Juan County group were there today to evaluate the site for preservation of the historical values and get an idea of what may be involved in reclaiming the site; what public safety hazards and environmental hazards are posed by the site in regard to leaving behind certain historical values.



We walked over an area of the site called the McCormick Tunnel, which includes a large portal, staging area, waste dump, large ore bin, and several old ore cars. In this area, San Juan County officials indicated they would like to preserve some of the features. The portal would remain, after sealing the inside of the portal back about 30 feet with some type of thick concrete bulkhead. We then discussed gateing the front entrance which consists of some very large wooden beams which are shoring up the cliff or hillside above the portal. Signs would be posted on the opening warning people of the hazards and to stay away.

We also discussed leaving the large ore bin behind as well, along with some of the ore cars and some of the old rail that is located in front of the portal and the staging area. The cars that would be preserved would be those that are parked off to the side of the staging area where the cliff edge is not as steep as directly in front of the staging area. The portion of the rail facility where the rail becomes perched high up on the cliff as it enters the ore bin area, would be removed. It presently poses a hazard to people who might want to climb on or explore the facility. We discussed either filling in the old ore bin with rocks or somehow sealing the top of the ore bin to prevent people from falling into it.

County officials mentioned they would like to see the whole facility saved as it allows for a picturesque scene coming up the canyon and for tourists. We discussed taking pictures of those portions of the site which may have to be reclaimed because of the public safety hazards they pose. Pictures would provide historical evidence of past activities on the site after these facilities have been removed. We emphasized to the county officials the safety hazards involved in leaving certain facilities intact at the site.

Our next stop during this visit was to another portal, which is found above and to the east of the McCormick tunnel. This portal or tunnel feeds into the greater MiVida/McCormick mine area and was the first tunnel established by Mr. Charlie Steen when mining began at the MiVida. The tunnel is still open and was used by Mr. Steen to send men and supplies into the mine. The ore came out at the McCormick tunnel, below this portal. We discussed sealing up this particular tunnel entirely, as it is in great need of repair and is beginning to cave in spots. It poses a public safety hazard. It also is the point at which drainage is now finding its way down the canyon and then into the mine workings, via this portal. Reclamation would take into account reworking the drainage above and to the side of this portal to prevent water from going into the mine. A plaque might be placed on the reclaimed hillside above the old portal identifying the location of this old portal.

Our next stop was further up the canyon, east of the McCormick and original Steen tunnel, where the old washroom/cook house is still standing. This area of the mine was Steen's original staging area for doing the mining. Many of the buildings and facilities associated with the MiVida mine had been established up in this area. Most of the buildings have been removed or have crumbled; only their concrete or stone foundations still remain. The one building that still remains is a large square building that was probably used as a change room, washroom, kitchen and office building.

Also in this area, there is a shaft that connects with the MiVida mine. The shaft has an old iron headframe attached to it and a hoist house. The shaft drops down into the mine about 150 feet and is still open. The opening of the shaft is about 6 feet square. The headframe is starting to fall down and the wooden framework around the shaft is beginning to deteriorate badly. Although the San Juan County officials found this particular feature to be interesting and picturesque, we discussed with them the idea of removing this feature completely, because of its hazard and sealing up the shaft. We also talked about removing the one remaining building on site that is beginning to become fairly rundown. It is still sturdy and standing and has a good roof; however, this particular building, without maintenance will, no doubt, start to fall apart and also become a public hazard.

We looked around the area to the east of the permitted area, where several of the older buildings had been located. Several pits and areas that are starting to subside can be found here. There is also a large portal that goes underground that remains open. The pits, subsidence areas, and portal located in this area, do pose a safety problem to people who may be exploring the area. Again, these features are off of the permitted boundary of the mine site so do not come under the jurisdiction of this program, or the responsibility of the mine operator, Energy Fuels. These are features that should be brought to the attention of the Division's Abandoned Mine Land Program, for some future work that may be developed at this site via the Abandoned Mine Land Reclamation Program.

This is a very old area and after its original discovery by Mr. Charles Steen, was worked by many different uranium operators. The area on and off the permitted site is strewn with lots of old mining debris like pieces of machinery, trash, lumber, etc. As part of the reclamation the operator would be expected to clean up those areas of the site that are within the permitted area. The operator would not be expected to clean up areas of the site off of the permitted area where debris and junk is found.



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Later, in reviewing the book **Uranium Frenzy**, I discovered (from a photo) that the original headframe and ore bin used by Mr. Steen, may still found on the site. Mr. Steen initiated the extraction of ore from the MiVida with a 6 X 8 foot shaft which he sunk approximately 70 feet before hitting ore. It may be located just below the newer Minerals West waste dump, about 200 feet down from the cook house/wash house and about 200 feet up from the original Steen portal. It is half buried by the Minerals West dump.

We explained to county officials that we would put together a general plan for reclaiming the MiVida and incorporate into that plan particular features of the site that would be preserved later on. We would try to get together with the operator, Energy Fuels, to discuss reclamation specifics of the site before submitting that plan to the county.

jb

cc: Roger Smith, Energy Fuels  
LaVern Tate, San Juan County Historical Society  
Wayne Hedberg, DOGM







